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ABSTRACT

A review of the nature of educational reforms over the years provides evidence that education reform is a recurrent issue, and that the aims and focus of reforms also tend to be cyclical. Two characteristics of reform--programmatic and systemic--are identified, and it is pointed out that the major focus of previous reform cycles has been on programmatic changes rather than systemic. The contention expressed in this paper is that in order to achieve a genuine and sustained systemic educational reform, teaching needs to have a true professional status. It is emphasized that educational reform must be left in the hands of the experts in the classroom, but if their recommendations are to be carried out, those involved in teaching must be recognized as true professionals and accorded respect as such. A discussion is presented on the nature of a profession and in what sense teaching is not at present a true profession. Some ways in which teaching can be transformed into a true profession are considered; e.g., the establishment of a National Certification Board with the power to control all aspects of teaching and responsible for establishing entry and exit requirements, course content, and standards to be met by teachers nationwide. What professionalization will imply for the future of teaching is discussed. References for futher reading are appended. (JD)

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EDUCATIONAL REFORM : THE FORGOTTEN FRONTIER

By S.L.Ansah, Mississippi Valley State Univ.

This paper looks at the nature of educational reforms over the years and discusses the missing link in these reform movements under the caption "The Forgotten Frontier". It is the contention of the writer that education today is under attack; that it was under attack yesteryear; and that it will be under attack tomorrow, unless teaching and those engaged in it are given the recognition and the professional status that they duly deserve. Unless teaching becomes a true profession, and unless reform efforts cease to be generated from outside the classroom by lay people who, vitually, control education, the nation will continue to experience these periodic resurgences of cries for educational reforms.

Educational Reforms in Retrospect

The symbiotic relationship that exists between society and education creates simultaneous changes in the latter whenever changes occur in the former. Thus, education in America has experienced various reform movements reflective of concurrent societal changes. Currently, the nation is in another wave of reform movement as a result of the conservative political mood of the nation. The overriding question at this point, however, is : What is the nature of these reforms ?

Rich (1981) identified two characteristics of reforms - programmatic and systemic. Programmatic reform involves curricular and program changes,including innovations with a view to achieving new goals and objectives. Systemic reform, on the

other hand, pertains to "authority, relationships and the distribution and allocation of power and resources" which are often carried out above and beyond the school. Rich observed that this century has seen a considerable number of programmatic reforms but barely any systemic ones. This observation is confirmed by a careful review of patterns of reforms and reform recommendations over the years. For instance, between 1893 -1895, the three Committees - the Committee of Fifteen on Elementary Education, the Committee of Ten on Secondary School Studies and the Committee on College Entrance Requirements, set up by the National Education Association submitted recommendations that emphasized mental discipline and the classical curriculum. However, the progressive education movement, the rise of industralization and the flow of immigrants to the United States all helped to focus attention on the person and to shift the emphasis from the classical curriculum during the turn of the 20th century, but the educational reforms during this era were still subject matter and program oriented. Neither were the reforms of 1918 recommended by the Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education nor those of the 1930s contained in the Report of the Educational Policies Commission of the National Education Association anything but programmatic too. In the 1940s the Educational Policies Commission modified its aims of education in its report - Education for All American Youth - to reflect the general needs of children and youth, but this reform effort was also programmatic.

In the 1950s, during the Cold War and Sputnik Era,

international events generated the movement to re-examine subject matter. The emphasis, once again, returned to academic essentials and mental discipline. The shift to academic essentials was endorsed by scholars like Conant whose book - **The American High School Today**, became a blueprint for reform (Ornstein and Levine, 1985).

The 1960s, with its social unrests, saw the pendulum swing from emphasis on the gifted and talented to concern for the disadvantaged. The needs of the disadvantaged were central to the reports of the Natonal Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders (1967) and the National Advisory Council on the Education of Disadvantaged Children (1969).

The 1970s saw a new reform focus on the disadvantaged which was broadened to include multicultural, bilingual, and special education for the handicapped and the learning disabled. In the 1980s, national attention has been refocused on educational excellence and higher academic standards. This renewed emphasis was echoed by the five major Commission and Task Force reports released in 1983 :

Academic Preparation for College (The College Board); **Making the Grade** (Twentieth Century Fund); Educating **Americans for the 21st Century** (National Science Foundation); **Action for Excellence** (Education Commission of the States), and **A Nation at Risk** (The National Commission on Excellence in Education).

All of the five reports emphasized tougher curricular standards and courses. Specifically, A Nation at Risk called for, among other things, tougher standards for graduation, including courses

in science, mathematics, foreign languages and the "new basics" - such as computer science. **Action for Excellence** focused on "basic skills" and "higher order skills" to meet the demand for "highly skilled human capital" in the "new era of global competition". **Educating Americans for the 21st Century** admonished that we return to the basics - but reiterated that the basics of the 21st century "are not only reading, writing and arithmetic" but should include "communication and higher problem solving skills and scientific and technological literacy". Making the Grade focused on upgrading science and mathematics education. **Academic Preparation for College** emphasized academic preparations essential for college entrance, focusing on six competencies, including reading, writing, computation skills, reasoning and studying, and intoned that "without such competencies .... knowledge of academic subjects is unattainable".

What is evident from this review is that education reform is a recurrent issue, and, that the aims and focus of reforms also tend to be cyclical. Thus, Ascheler (1984) noted that the 1983 reforms were reminiscent of the 1950s which led to the upgrading of science, mathematics, and foreign languages. Tyack and James (1983) observed that reform recommendations tend to fall into predictable patterns : In the liberal periods such as the 1930s, 1960s, and early 1970s, education was expected to " serve the disadvantaged, broaden its functions and overcome rigidity". In conservative times such as the 1890s, 1950s, and 1980s, however, "education tends to focus on the talented, emphasize the basics and academics".

In addition to educational reform being recurrent, the review also shows that, over the years, reform has been programmatic in nature. The fact that educational reforms have become periodic is symptomatic of their lack of lasting success, and should be a cause for concern. These factors (recurrence and lack of lasting success) are indications that we need to look beyond programs and course content in our efforts to reform education.

It is therefore being suggested in this paper that a systemic reform of education is long overdue as an alternative to the much used programmatic approach which has had limited success, so far. It is further being suggested that school reforms begin with teaching and teachers, not from curricular and program stand-point, as the current reform reports emphasize, but rather from a structural and organizational stance. In other words, a systemic approach is needed.

Though both past and present reform reports have touched on teaching and teachers, they also reveal gross omissions because the emphases are almost always on requirements and standards to be met rather than on the professional status of career teachers. For instance, The Illinois State Commission on the Improvement of Elementary and Secondary Education (1984) in its report, **Excellence in the Making**, made 28 recommendations on school personnel of which 9 were about administrators, 15 on teachers and 4 were general. Of the 15 on teachers, 13 dealt with requirements and standards teachers have to satisfy; only 2 were about their professional status - one on salary and the other on public recognition. The Illinois case is not an isolated incident. All one needs to do is examine reports from other

states. Neither are the major national reports any significantly different.

What a number of these reports did, at best, was to recommend handouts to teachers in the form of awards for outstanding teachers, including summer study and travel, forgivable loans, career ladders, 11-month teacher contracts, performance-based salary schedules and fellowships. Others merely indulged in sheer rhetoric such as "express a new and higher regard for teachers" and "The professional teacher would be an autonomous teacher in the classroom". These are mere platitudes in the face of a major reform need, which is the professionalization of teaching, and which is seen as a viable systemic reform capable of sustaining a more enduring educational reform.

The need for systemic reform is, however, beginning to gain some attention. The Carnegie Report (1984) - **A Nation Prepared**, called for a restructuring of the school and its organization. Seely (1983) noted that for school reform to succeed it must emphasize relationships - relationships between school services and students. Catherine Cornbleth (1986) also pointed out that:

> If the purpose of education reform is to enhance the scope and quality of teaching and learning in elementary and secondary schools, then more than reform of teacher education is required. Complementary changes in the conditions of schooling are needed to support and sustain quality teaching.

The question then is, how do we approach systemic reform in view of its inherent confrontational tendencies, its basic conflicts in authority domains ? The answer is simple. Professionalize teaching. There is evidence (Imig, 1986) that there have always been efforts to reform teacher education,

though programmatically. What has always been missing, and is still missing from the hundreds of reform reports between 1983 and 1986 is a genuine effort to seek the professionalization of teaching (The Forgotten Frontier).

The contention expressed in this paper is that in order to achieve a genuine and sustained educational reform, teaching needs to achieve a true professional status. Educational reform must be left in the hands of the experts in the classroom, but for their voices and recommendations to carry, teaching and those involved in it should be recognized as true professionals and be accorded respect as such. It is this glossing over of the importance of the professionalization of teaching in educational reform movements that is referred to in this paper as The **Forgotten Frontier**. The professionalization of teaching must no longer remain a forgotten frontier. It must be pushed to the front burners.

The series of questions that arise then are : In what sense is teaching not a true profession ? How can it be transformed into one ? What will the professionalization of teaching do for education ?

Abraham Flexner (1915) pointed out that in order to have a profession in the true sense, something other than a mere claim or a degree is needed. Banner (1985) indicated that "a true profession is not, and has never been, defined by the elements that compose its tangible benefits nor its member professionals by virtue merely of their compensation for work or their trustworthiness". Other scholars like Woodring (1960), Leiberman

(1956), Goode (1957), Corwin (1965), Havinghurst and Levine (1979), Howsam (1976), and the National Education Association (1971) define a profession in terms of characteristics, with emphasis on some core characteristics. Based on such works, though it becomes apparent that no profession can have all the professed characteristics, it is also evidently clear that teaching lacks some of the core characteristics of a true profession. Teaching lacks such significant characteristics as :

1. A defined body of knowledge
2. Control over licensing and admission requirements,and the ability to set its own standards
3. Autonomy in making decisions
4. A lifetime commitment to career with few members leaving the profession
5. Self-governance with the power to censure and discipline

A Defined Body of Knowledge

Though there are volumes of work produced by educators on teaching, there has never been any concerted effort to pull all these works together and crystallize them into a body of knowledge on teaching. One reason may be that there are such divergent views on what constitutes knowledge on teaching, and the education of teachers, for that matter, among educators. Consider the content of teacher education courses, for instance. They differ from state to state, and even within a state. All one needs to do is pick up a few university catalogs and scan the

range of course offerings by schools and departments of education. The magnitude of the lack of consensus becomes very clear. This is further aggravated by the differences in certification requieremements across states. These differences are so great that unlike other professions one cannot practice teaching outside the state where one was certified except in a few states where reciprocity exists. With most professions, on the other hand, licence means the ability to practice anywhere in that country. Furthermore, with most professions, though teaching methods may differ, the knowledge base of the profession remains the same, and does not change from institution to institution. Thus, constitutional law of the United States is the same in every law school no matter which Law school one attends. Compare this with a course like Education Foundations, and the diversity is just baffling.

Finally, teaching is the one "profession" where research does not complement practice. In the teaching field, the research is produced by one set of experts while the teaching is carried out by a different set of experts. Somehow the practitioners are expected to consume and utilize the research knowledge. However, there has never really been any effective collaborative arrangements between higher education where the research is done and the public schools where the teaching is carried out. Thus, research findings and theories are not put into practice, and even sometimes these works are not accessible to those expected to use them. This makes the whole notion of producing a defined body of knowledge on teaching one big farce.

Control over Licensing, Admissions and Standards

Whereas in most professions, control over licensing, and the establishment of entry requirements and standards are in the hands of members of the profession, in teaching these prerogatives are controlled by lay people, - state agencies like state departments of education, on one hand, while local education boards control hiring, censuring and firing. Thus, teaching has become more of a civil service job, and less of a profession as a result of the many rules, regulations and laws imposed by legislatures and other governmental agencies (Ravitch, 1983).

Besides, as a result of the lay control over licensing, professional standards are often compromised. Emergency certificates are issued to people, and even practitioners are sometimes allowed in without licences. In 1985, in the state of Mississippi, 36.2% of mathematics teachers in grades 7-12 were not licensed to teach mathematics; about 36.2% of the science teachers in the public schools did not hold certificates in science; and 33% of the foreign language teachers were not certified to teach in that area (Ms. State Department of Education, 1985). Furthermore, the new antidote to emergency certificates, alternative certification, is nothing but an alternative means to deprofessionalize teaching still further by allowing untrained people into the field. Can you think of any profession where one can legally practise without the appropriate training and licence ? How many of us will allow an untrained and unlicensed surgeon to operate on us, especially, on our brain ?

Autonomy

Most professions have the autonomy to establish their own standards and spheres of work, and the power to censure and discipline their members in ways that are approved by the public, thereby gaining public faith and respect.

Lay control is an anathema to the professions, but with teaching, on the other hand, lay control is the rule rather than the exception. Teaching and teachers are controlled by lay people and their spheres of work are dictated by the general public. Any taxpayer feels competent to challenge and question a teacher at any time on issues ranging from professional judgement to competence. Communities may tell a teacher not only what to teach, but also how to teach, and what books to use.

Thus, the concept of "fiduciary relationship" (objective counsel) by which the professional presumes to know and do what is best for the client does not seem to exist in teaching. Can you imagine a patient or some member of the public telling his physician how to treat his/her medical problem ? Can you imagine yourself or a member of your family directing your attorney as to how to defend you in a court of law ? When this happens in other professions, the professional - client relationship breaks down; but this is not so in teaching where such things are common practices.

In addition, unlike the other professions, public school teachers are not free to choose their clients, nor are they free to determine how much to charge a client for services rendered.

Teaching therefore seems to lack the autonomy that is essential to a profession. At best it may be called a semi-

profession or a quasi-profession (Etzioni,1969). This then leads us to our next question : How does teaching become a true profession ?

The Road to Professionalization

The first step towards professionalization is to push for the implementation of the Carnegie Commission's (1984) recommendation for the establishment of a National Certification Board controlled by teachers to oversee professional teaching standards. A modification of this agenda is, however, deemed necessary. The Carnegie proposal focused on experienced teachers; but what is needed though is a National Board, fashioned after those of Law and Medicine, with the power to control all aspects of teaching and teachers across the board and across the nation. With the creation of such a Board one can almost see the seeds of professional autonomy for teaching and teachers growing. Admittedly, the creation of a National Board responsible for establishing entry and exit requirements, course content, and standards to be met by teachers across the nation is not going to be easy. However, as pointed out earlier, systematic reform is inherently confrontational. Thus, state agencies are not going to relinquish their power over teachers that easily. The initial step in this direction will be for teachers to ask for government deregulation of teaching and to demand control over the field, so that those in teaching can regulate it themselves. This may be more beneficial because as Wise (1986) pointed out, "the regulation of a profession by itself achieves results for society that cannot be achieved in any other way". What we can do after

deregulation is to create interim State Boards to work in conjunction with the National Board. The State Boards, which will be phased out as the National Board becomes well established, will be responsible for upholding the rules, regulations and standards established by the National Board. Such a National Board, it is believed, will confer an almost instant professional status upon teaching because it will enable teaching to achieve the following core characteristics of a profession :

1. control over licensure, standards and admission requirements
2. autonomy over decision making
3. self-governance with power to censure and discipline

Other ways by which we can enhance the professional status of teaching and teachers include a serious attempt to develop a body of knowledge for teaching with an emphasis on a "teaching lingo" full of terminologies that only trained teachers can understand; something similar to that of other professions (e.g. law, medicine, police, and the army). It appears that in most professions the tendency is to shroud knowledge in secrecy in order to emphasize professional expertise and maximize personal importance and respect for the profession. In teaching it is quite the opposite. At present the language of teaching is too bland and simple, easily understood by the lay public, hence the misguided belief that anybody can be a teacher irrespective of whether one has acquired the necessary training or not.

Furthermore, teachers may take the cue from the other professions and establish private practices. Thus, a number of K-12 teachers can band together and rent a county public school

building and charge competitive fees to conduct classes. Parents will then have to pay specified rates by the hour for the services provided or requested. The federal and state governments can provide aid to needy parents through a voucher system, or an educare and educaid systems (counterparts of medicare and medicaid) which will be paid directly to the bodies providing the services. Such organizations could easily become the Humana Hospitals in the Teaching field, multi-billion-dollar corporations housing both the research and teaching components of the profession. Since people have a tendency to value things that they pay for directly (and have a rather warped belief that the more expensive the better), the chances are that people will begin to develop respect for both teaching and teachers.

Implications of Professionalization

According to Banner (1985) making teaching into a true profession goes against the historical grain because historically, the American public school has always been under local control, a practice that contradicts the professionalization of teaching. Secondly, he pointed out, a basic philosophy of teaching is sharing knowledge with the client which is contrary to what happens in the other professions. However, as Denemark (1985) indicated :

> Professional status is important not because of what that status will mean for us as individuals but rather because of its import for the quality and character of teaching and learning in our schools.

Other scholars like Sizer (1983), Haberman (1986), Banner (1985), Hawley (1986) and Wise (1986) have similarly advocated for the

professionalization of teaching.

The significance of professionalization is too obvious for comment. Professionalization will mean autonomy, control over licensure and standards, and self-governance with the power to regulate conduct and standards. All these will create respect for and confidence in teaching, and bring teachers the respect they want from the public (McLaughlin, 1986). In addition, the practice of state agencies issuing emergency certificates to untrained individuals to teach will end. Professionalization will inculcate the fiduciary relationship between teachers and their clients which will enhance the respect for the teacher as an expert, too, as is the case in other professions. It is anticipated that this will curb the tendency of the public to dictate and prescribe processes and cure to be used by teachers in dealing with their clients.

Professionalization will further dictate who enters teaching. Thus, the overwhelming emphasis on the quality of teachers contained in the reform reports of 1983 will not re-occur, and the nation will not spend millions of dollars on lay persons to produce mere rhetoric on what is wrong with the nation's education. Such projects will be undertaken in the form of self-study by the profession itself.

Professionalization will also give control over what is taught and how it is taught to the experts instead of the current lay people who dictate what goes on in the classroom. Control over the curriculum by teachers will mean that any needed reform will be initiated by the people who know what goes on in the classroom. Thus, the chances of reform efforts succeeding are

greatly enhanced.

Conclusion

It has been the contention in this paper that since programmatic reforms have not been very successful, there is the need to turn to systemic reform in education. The systemic reform that is advocated in this paper is the professionalization of teaching,which has hitherto been glossed over by other reform efforts. Though systemic reform is inherently conflictual, the ensuing professionalization of teaching could ensure the success of future educational reforms because the teachers would then be the front-runners and the banner-holders of reform. However, unless this concept of professionalizing teaching is recognized and accepted by the American public, the country will be perpetually plagued by waves of short-lived and ineffectual educational reforms because reform efforts will be generated from outside the classroom as usual. It is therefore in our interest and the interest of public education in America to start pushing for the professionalization of teaching which has always been treated as a "Forgotten Frontier".

This is where, possibly, the nation is at risk. Our inability to recognize that the business of teaching and educating should be in the hands of the trained experts - the teachers, rather than lay people. That is the risk. In short, the risk lies in allowing lay people to control and dictate what goes on in education across this country. The consequence is that inoperable and ineffectual remedies are prescribed for our educational maladies. As a result the cancer of miseducation spreads on and

becomes more malignant each day. This is the RISK that the nation runs by not seeking to professionalize teaching but rather keeps treating it as a "Forgotten Frontier" in educational reforms.

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